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THURSDAY, JULY 7, 2016

Boat capsizes

Three rescued from Lake Erie.
Page 2

Free events

Niagara jam packed with summer fun.
Page 6

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UPFRONT

Three rescued from lake

BERNO FRANKE
Postmedia Network

Three people, including one showing signs of shock and possible hypothermia, were rescued last Saturday more than a kilometre offshore after high waves capsized their catamaran in Lake Erie.

Port Colborne Marine Auxiliary Rescue (POCOMAR) volunteers were unable to tow their boat to safety.

"There just wasn't enough time because of the wind direction and heading," said Sheila Lindsey, coxswain of POCOMAR's largest rescue boat.

"We ran out of water underneath the boat."

Rescuers, who responded to a 911 call from shore shortly before 5 p.m., found the people clinging to the capsized vessel and wearing life-jackets. They had been in the water for nearly an hour, Lindsey said.

It was POCOMAR's 19th call of the season and one of its most challenging. Waves as high as 2.5 metres and winds gusting to 50 km/h made it difficult to approach the catamaran.

"The crew on board did a phenomenal job. We just implemented our training," she said.

Volunteers Bill Gearheart, Dave Johnson and Dave Thorpe were on the rescue boat along with Lindsey and



DAVE JOHNSON PHOTO COURTESY PORT COLBORNE MARINE AUXILIARY RESCUE

Two people cling to their capsized catamaran awaiting rescue by the POCOMAR Canadian Coast Guard auxiliary unit Saturday in Lake Erie. Three people were rescued more than a kilometre offshore, but the catamaran couldn't be towed to shore.

unit commander Norm Dashwood.

In reports to 911 people on shore said the catamaran capsized somewhere between Sugarloaf Point and Morgan's Point.

"When we arrived on scene,

we spotted all three people holding on," Lindsey said.

"We were able to get all three people safely onboard, but couldn't safely tow the catamaran."

She said with one person showing signs of possi-

ble hypothermia after prolonged exposure to the 19°C water, the priority was returning to shore and getting medical care.

Two of the people on the catamaran are from the Toronto area. The other is

from Port Colborne.

No information was immediately available at press time about the condition of the boaters.

The Canadian Coast Guard station in Prescott, Ont., south of Ottawa, relayed a message

to the Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre in Trenton asking for Niagara EMS paramedics to meet the rescue vessel at the boat launch at H.H. Knoll Lakeview Park in Port Colborne.

POCOMAR volunteers went back for the catamaran after the three people were transferred into the care of paramedics, but by then it was late. By the time, the rescue vessel arrived on the scene the catamaran had drifted into the west end of a breakwall and was up against rocks.

"We couldn't do anything," Lindsey said. "We had to leave it there unfortunately."

The rescue marked the second call of the day for the unit. Volunteers were dispatched to a report of a boat being hung up in the Bay Beach area of Fort Erie but were called back.

They also stood down later in the day when boats from the Fort Erie fire department were able to rescue at least three people reported needing assistance in the water off Crystal Beach.

The all-volunteer unit, part of the Canadian Coast Guard auxiliary, covers Lake Erie from the mouth of the Niagara River to the mouth of the Grand River in Halimand County, an area of approximately 432 square kilometres and 63 km of shoreline.

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LOCAL NEWS

Niagara gets GO-ahead

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Year-round weekday GO rail service will reach Niagara by 2021.

Commuter service to the region is expected to begin in Grimsby and will be expanded through to St. Catharines and Niagara Falls by 2023.

The announcement was made by Ontario Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca last Tuesday on a packed platform at the St. Catharines train station.

The Niagara GO rail extension, subject to a final agreement with CN Rail, will operate on 60 kilometres of track between the future Confederation station in Hamilton — for which construction begins next year and will be completed in 2019 — and Niagara Falls.

It will include construction of a new station at Casablanca Boulevard in Grimsby, as well as upgrades to existing train stations in St. Catharines and Niagara Falls.

Those retrofits will begin as soon as summer 2017, Del Duca said.

"I think it's really important for the people of this community to recognize that starting next summer they will see a physical manifestation of our commitment to deliver trains with respect to the station upgrades."

In addition to the new and upgraded rail stations, the expansion will require a number of infrastructure improvements, including 30



Ontario Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca was joined by St. Catharines MPP Jim Bradley at the St. Catharines train station to announce the expansion of GO train service into the Niagara Region. Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati, left, poses for a selfie with Minister Del Duca.

kilometres of new track, existing track upgrades, a new layover facility in Niagara Falls and new additions to the fleet of trains.

Metrolinx is leading talks with CN, the owners of the rail corridor between Hamilton and Ni-

agara Falls, to determine infrastructure needs and service levels, Del Duca said.

When an agreement with CN is reached, Metrolinx will undertake planning and design work required to implement the service.

"If, as a result of this important process, work can progress faster, it will," Del Duca said.

"I want to be clear about this. The funding is there. Our government's desire is there and we will deliver on this project."

The minister declined to comment on the expansion's overall cost, citing ongoing negotiations with CN.

"We don't tend to put a dollar figure out into the public sphere until we know exactly what work is required, because

we don't want to effectively prejudice any outcome of any procurement that's required," he said. "But I can confirm that all of the internal approvals that I need from the government of Ontario are in place, including financial approvals to deliver on GO train service to Niagara."

Once negotiations with CN are complete and a "better sense" of exactly what the dollar figure will be, the community will be updated, he said.

Del Duca said discussions with CN, which also include details of exact ride times and number of Niagara trains, are going "very well" with a finalized agreement expected in the near future.

Service will take place in the morning and afternoon at minimum to start.

Del Duca commended the region, and all those who worked on the Niagara file, for their "continued and relentless advocacy for making sure that we get this right."

He gave particular praise to St. Catharines MPP Jim Bradley for constantly and continually pushing for Niagara GO.

"All of the work the region has done has helped to enforce the process," he said.

"We will deliver on a massive win for Niagara region."

The announcement was a proud moment for Regional Chairman Alan Caslin.

"Congratulations Niagara, we've finally done it," he told the crowd of supporters.

Continued on Page 14

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GO announcement has a touch of grey

GRANT
LAFLECHE

Finally — after the business plan, and the political wrangling, and the rallies and the social media campaigns — Niagara is getting GO trains.

Well, eventually.

Ontario will go to the polls twice before the trains start running to and from Niagara Falls every morning and evening. And by the time the Niagara line is operational in 2023, local governments will have also changed members twice.

But all things being equal, the trains are coming.

Last Tuesday's announcement by Ontario's Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca left me with mixed feelings.

On the one hand, it is enormously gratifying to see Niagara finally crossing this particular political Rubicon. GO trains are not a magic bullet to cure what ails the local economy, but they do represent a key pillar to transforming a region that for too long has been cut off from the rest of Ontario.

And it will spur the rapid development of a true Niagara regional transit system that will allow local residents to move easier across our 12 municipalities.

But last Tuesday's announcement also left me frustrated. It will take until 2023 for the line to be fully operational, meaning it will do little good to our struggling region in the here and now.

No one expects a commuter service to appear magically out of the ether, but seven years is a long time to wait.

The wait seems especially long when you consider the potential to get people moving sooner than that exists.

For those who missed the announcement, Del Duca said work on Niagara GO stations in Grimsby, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls will begin next year. The Confederation GO station in Hamilton is expected to be operational in 2019, and trains could start arriving in Grimsby in 2021.

Two years later, the full line to Niagara Falls will be active.

The importance of this to Niagara cannot be understated. Building a commuter link to the GTA, and in particular to Hamilton, will allow Niagara residents to travel to jobs outside the region, permit local businesses to attract out-of-Niagara talent, provide



BOB TNYACZYK/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Ontario Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca was joined by St. Catharines MPP Jim Bradley at the St. Catharines train station to announce the expansion of GO train service into the Niagara Region.

students better access to Niagara's post-secondary institutions, and will likely be a boost to the local tourism sector.

Niagara Region Chairman Alan Caslin was beaming last Tuesday, proclaiming that Niagara is "back, and here to stay."

You could ask "back from where?" given that the notion that Niagara once had a golden age is a recent political myth, but never mind that. Caslin has just cause to be proud, as does his predecessor Gary Burroughs, the local mayors who worked on the GO file as well as regional staff.

Let's face it, this could have easily gone horribly wrong. Niagara has a well-earned political reputation as being a den of petty political infighting, and each month regional council finds new ways to reinforce that image.

But on the GO file, Niagara did something unprecedented: it acted as a unified region in the best interests of the people

who live here.

At any point along the way over the past few years, Niagara's reflective urge for infighting could have derailed the whole project.

But it didn't, and the GO file should serve as a template for what Niagara can do politically when it isn't acting like a gaggle of yahoos.

However, the tentative timeline is somewhat troubling. If the Confederation station can be up and running by 2019, there is no reason why a version of the Niagara line cannot be running by then — perhaps with stops in St. Catharines and Niagara Falls while the Grimsby station is under construction.

Del Duca said several times the government has to hammer out a deal with CN, which owns the rail lines often occupied by freight trains. But surely a deal can be struck by 2019 to get the Niagara service

running early.

How much this will all cost is also a total mystery. Niagara Region's business plan pegged the cost between \$100 million and \$120 million.

Del Duca insisted Niagara GO is budgeted for, but he declined to say what the projected cost is, or if the \$40 million the Region has already committed will be sufficient. Costs won't be released, he said, until a deal with CN is completed.

Given that the business plan has a projected cost attached to it, surely Del Duca could tell the public if that is in the ball park.

I don't want to be a wet blanket about Niagara GO. Tuesday's announcement is a significant step forward for the region. But there remains a number of questions left unanswered by Queen's Park and I will refrain from opening up the sparkling wine until the answers become clear.

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LOCAL NEWS

Burn ban offenders 'put other people at risk'

ANDREA TINGEY
Postmedia Network

Despite the fact that the burn ban was issued a week earlier, some local residents didn't get the message.

St. Catharines Fire Chief Dave Wood issued a burn ban June 23 due to the drought conditions Niagara has been experiencing. Fireworks, open fires, and sparklers were all banned for the duration of the long weekend.

According to Wood, the fire department received nine complaints last Friday and seven last Saturday, mostly between 7:30 and 9:30 p.m.

"We had our trucks running

all over the city for that two or three hour period," said Wood, who added that it affected normal operations.

Wood said he had to reroute vehicles from further away to respond to a collision on St. Paul and Ontario Street. "We had to dispatch rescue one from up town, pump five from the Martindale Road station, pump three from the Pelham Road station, but because of the prolonged dry period over the last month... we put it in place because fire safety comes paramount to the whole community as a whole," he said.

"It's unfortunate that some people chose not to abide by it and put other people at risk," Niagara Falls Platoon Chief Tom Warman said he received

seven burning bylaw calls last Friday night.

"I can say that we've responded to more calls than normally," he said. "We did have a fire Friday night but I did have a truck available to handle the call for a burning bylaw complaints for fireworks... so it hasn't really interrupted our service."

"Most people that we have talked to have been understanding and compliant," he added.

"We've had a few people that did ask why the Great Wolf Lodge could set off fireworks, why the parks commission can and they can't. But once we explained it to them they seemed to understand. We didn't have too many repeat offenders."

"We're hoping the word gets out there and people are still aware of it," he said.

There is no word yet on whether or not fines were issued, as fines are handed out by fire prevention services.

The burning ban is still in effect for eight municipalities, including St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Grimsby, West Lincoln, Pelham, Fort Erie, Lincoln, and Wainfleet. The ban will be lifted once weather conditions change.

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LOCAL NEWS



BOB THOROLD/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

The Thorold Reed Concert Band performs the first of its Wednesday night free concerts that run throughout summer in Beaversdam Park in Thorold.

Hey, these activities are free and in Niagara. Really.

CHEERY CLOCK
Postmedia Network

These days the idea of getting something for free is often met with suspicion.

This summer put your skepticism aside for a moment and consider the wealth of no-cost events and activities offered across Niagara. Think music, fireworks, movies, even a campfire with song and marshmallows. Your only cost is the gas to get there – and hotdogs for the fire.

In just about every corner of the region, there is free live music throughout July and August. Pretty much the only requirements are a lawn chair or blanket to sit on, and time to spend outdoors.

In St. Catharines, local musicians perform in Montebello Park Wednesday nights into July, and Music in the Square returns Saturdays at Market Square.

Niagara Falls offers several free concert series — Coca-Cola concerts at the Queen Victoria stage, Thursday Blues in the Park and Twilight Tuesdays at Fireman's Park — and concerts on a more intimate scale at Niagara Falls History Museum.

There's always the sounds of big bands, Dixie and blues at Queenston Heights Park Sunday afternoons, and at the Fon-

thill bandshell on Thursday nights. The Thorold Reed Concert Band again offers its summer pop series at Beaversdam Park on Wednesday nights.

Niagara has its share of concert bands, and although they've been around for more than a century, their relevance is still intricately connected to the community.

"Where else do you get to go to a concert that you don't have to pay to see, and just sit and enjoy the music," says Lois Dix, who conducts both the Niagara Falls Concert Band and the Lincoln and Welland Ambassadors Swing Band.

Musicians are all volunteers, although sometimes the conductors are paid.

"Music is a way of life for many musicians," she says. "They play for the love of playing."

Repertoire can span the decades, from big band medleys to *Born to be Wild*, a tribute to Elton John to the dance medley from *Stevie*.

Community concert bands give opportunity to amateur musicians and quality entertainment to the community, Dix says.

Continued on Page 12

LOCAL NEWS



ALL AM BANNER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

In this file photo, Welland economic development officer Dan Degazio and Mayor Frank Campion hold bottles of wine, with administrative assistance Lina DeChellis, celebrating the announcement that General Electric will be setting up shop in Welland with economic development representatives from across Niagara, including, back, from left, Evan Acs, Brian York, Jim Thibert, Adam Joon and David Oaks at the beginning of June in Welland.

Region commits \$4M to GE move

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Niagara Region will invest \$4 million in financial incentives and infrastructure improvements to ready for the new General Electric plant in Welland.

Councillors voted unanimously last Thursday to provide funding to the Industrial and Gateway Development Charge Grant program, as well as to road upgrades in the Rose City to support the sizeable project announced last month.

A 468,000-square-foot gas engine plant to be built off Highway 140 will mean the creation of 150 jobs in the region once it's up and running in early 2018.

Council also approved transferring \$1.1 million from the taxpayer relief reserve to the grant program in support of the manufacturing facility.

An additional \$1.5 million will be transferred from the relief reserve in support of the Region's commitment to partner with Welland on road and inter-

change improvements at the Highway 140 and Buchner Road Intersection. Road upgrades are required to address the increase in traffic anticipated due to the development.

The amount initially earmarked to be transferred to the relief reserve in 2016 was also reduced by \$1.4 million, with those dollars also supporting the development charges grant.

"It's a fantastic opportunity for the entire region," Welland Mayor Frank Cammon said.

Grimsby Mayor Bob Bentley questioned what commitment the Region or Welland will receive from the company in exchange for the incentive dollars.

There have been companies that have previously accessed incentives and then relocated shortly after, he said, declining to go into detail about specific organizations or municipalities.

Continued on Page 11

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Troubled waters in Port Colborne

LAURA BARTON
Postmedia Network

Some Port Colborne residents could soon find themselves with no water at all.

The proposal comes from Chris Lee, manager of projects and design with the city's engineering and operations department, who said dur-

ing the June 27 regular council meeting that many still haven't changed their water meters.

"Essentially what's happened at this point in time is we have a number of residents that are not phoning in and making appointments to have their meters changed," he told council.

He presented council with a memorandum that suggested invoking a clause in the city's water bylaw that would allow his department to shut off the water to the homes because they are not being allowed to do their job.

He said these people have been given several notices

about the need to change the water meters - three from the contractor Neptune Technology Group and three from the city.

The mandatory water meter replacement program began at the beginning of the year. Now at the year's halfway mark, they're trying to wrap it up.

The original plan was to have the project completed by the end of July, so Lee said it's a matter of getting it done before the contract is up and the contractor moves on. Otherwise, it will cost the city to change the meters.

"We're desperate trying to get their attention, if you would," he said. "We want to make this happen."

Deputy Mayor Bea Kenny said during the meeting she was pleased that 98 per cent of residents have already made the change, but she thinks they've had enough warning.

Her suggestion is to have the residents pay for the meter replacement if they're not changed by the time the contract is up. She said if the cost has to come out of their own pockets, it will have an impact.

"Now they're getting a replace-

ment, it's not costing them a thing," said Kenny. "It's giving them a very fair meter reading."

She said when the contractors came to her home, they were there no longer than 15 minutes, and Lee said that's on par with the average time it takes to swap the meters out.

Residents were also already warned that non-compliance would mean a \$650 flat rate, quarterly fee for their water bills.

The city wants to replace the meters because many have been around since the 90s and no longer give an accurate reading. The new meters use radio frequency to track water usage, which is not only more accurate, but much more affordable, too.

Council decided to invoke the bylaw clause and shut off the water of non-compliant residents after fair warning. Implementing the flat rate fee or other fees are still up for debate.

For questions or to make an appointment to have your meter changed, contact metproj@portcolborne.ca or call 905-835-2960.

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LOCAL NEWS

Man gets two years for role in Sawa jail death

ALISON LANGLEY
Postmedia Network

The sister of a Port Colborne man who hanged himself at the Thorold jail after being attacked and tortured by fellow inmates after they learned he was facing sex-related offences involving a child says she is haunted by what happened in her brother's final moments.

"The whole ordeal has been cruel, unfair and life-changing," Lisa Sawa wrote in a victim impact statement read by assistant Crown attorney Graeme Leach in Ontario Superior Court in Welland last Tuesday.

"My goodwill has been shattered."

Kelvin Sawa, a 46-year-old taxi driver, was found hanging in his cell in the maximum security area at Niagara Detention Centre in August 2011.

Twelve months after a jury failed to reach a verdict at his second-degree murder trial, 42-year-old Jeremy Hall was sentenced to two years behind bars after he pleaded guilty last Tuesday to the lesser and included offence of manslaughter in connection with Sawa's death.

His sister said Hall is not the only one to blame for her older brother's death. She said other inmates, as well as staff at the jail, were also responsible for what happened.

"... What the monsters at the Niagara Detention Centre did to him. He wasn't even safe from the guards."

On Aug. 15, 2011, court heard, a corrections officer told an inmate the nature of the charges against Sawa. That information was immediately relayed to Hall who confronted Sawa in the shower area and

Assistant Crown attorney Andrew Brown said individuals charged with sex offences, particularly allegations involving minors, are "deemed the lowest end of the 'pecking order' of any custodial institution."

When Sawa left the shower, other inmates began taunting, threatening and assaulting him.

One inmate forced him to eat a stick of deodorant.

At one point, other inmates urged Sawa's cellmate to push the man forward to the cell bars so they could reach in to assault him. The inmate complied.



HANDOUT PHOTO

Continued on Page 13

Kelvin Sawa



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LOCAL NEWS

Change to autism program brings mixed feelings

ANDREA TINEY
Postmedia Network

News that the Ontario government is restoring funding that was stripped from children with autism came as good news last week for several St. Catharines parents.

The estimated \$200-million proposal comes after significant backlash against the Liberal government for its changes to the Ontario Autism Program.

In March, it announced it would begin a new Ontario Autism Program that blends Intensive Behavioural Intervention and Applied Behaviour Analysis.

But that program, estimated to cost \$333 million, was due to begin in 2018. In the meantime, the government decided to stop funding IBI for children over the age of four, and to compensate families removed from the wait list by \$8,000.

But the cost for a year of IBI in Niagara is an estimated \$50,000, meaning the

compensation would only cover a few months' therapy.

In an announcement last Tuesday, Michael Coteau, minister for children and youth services, said the government now will give parents successive payments of \$10,000 until their child has a new spot in the program.

Parents can also choose to enrol their children in ABA, funded by the government. In addition, the Liberal government plans to roll out the new program in 2017, a year earlier than previously announced.

So far, reaction has been mixed.

Melanie Cooper said she cried "happy tears" when she heard the announcement. Her son Reese, now 13, received the therapy beginning at age five.

"This is kind of a baby step in fixing a system that's extremely flawed," she said, "but I would say it's a victory for parents and the families



Melanie Cooper sits at home with her son Reese, who has autism. Last week, the provincial government reversed its controversial changes it had made to funding and care for children with autism.

and the organizations and politicians that fought so hard for this to happen."

her son's life.

"When he received IBI ... he went from a nonverbal developmentally delayed child to speaking full sen-

tences, reading, writing, learning to manipulate the Internet, tying his shoes, using a fork," she said.

"He gained skills that most parents take for granted."

The intensive behavioural therapy is a more rigorous version of the applied analysis. Under the old program, children with autism would receive up to 21 hours a week of one-on-one IBI for up to two years, paid in full by the provincial government.

While the new announcement means more options for families, Mar Siscoe said he would rather have his son in the old program.

Siscoe's six-year-old son, Darius, was removed from the wait list without receiving any sort of therapy. Siscoe, a St. Catharines city councillor, began fundraising to cover the costs of IBI

therapy after the March announcement.

"Both programs have merit, and when it comes to treatment they both have been proven effective. It's just the intensity of the IBI is what we really felt our son needed," he said.

Although he said he is happy parents were able to bring about some form of change, he is tentative.

"It seems like there is more power being given to parents to direct the type of therapies their children are going to see," he said. "What's right for my son might be different from someone else's."

Venette Garden-Purcell's five-year-old son, James, was also removed from the list in March, after a two-year wait.

"It's nice to know that parents all across Ontario can now get back to getting treatment for their (children), so they can have that better quality of life now and in the future," she said. "For me, it was a huge win. It makes a huge difference in our life, and in his life."

However, she is still uneasy.

"I see a lot of parents are still kind of hesitant until we see it in writing. There is a trust issue, but I think Minister Coteau seems to be the guy for the job," she said. "There's a lot that still needs to be done as far as in the autism community."

"It's been a long three months," she said, noting she wants to pursue the private funding option because of the flexibility it allows.

"Kids with (autism spectrum disorder) are the most vulnerable members of our society, so when the most powerful pick on them, we kind of have to stand up and say no."

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LOCAL NEWS

Region commits \$4M to GE move

From Page 7

"They were temporary. They were accessing the funds and then left town, so there's no real commitment over five, 10 or 20 years."

David Oakes, the Region's economic development director, said the guarantee comes in the form of building permits applied for by the company.

The land has been purchased for the facility and GE's investment in the project is "north of \$250 million," he said.

"That in itself is significant and the plant that they're replacing has been in operation for close to 100 years."

GE is closing its plant in Wisconsin and making the move to Niagara.

The factory will initially manufacture GE Power's reciprocating engines, components for compression, mechanical drive and power generation, and manufacture components

for GE transportation diesel engines, used mostly in the oil and gas industry.

Construction is expected to begin before the end of this summer on 75 acres of land on the west side of Highway 140, between Silverthorn Street and Buchner Road, encompassing the entire Harry Diffin Industrial Park.

The construction and ongoing operation of the plant is expected to inject hundreds of millions of dollars into the Niagara area, a staff report presented Thursday said.

The development will be eligible for the incentive dollars, which staff estimated at about \$2.5 million based on the projected size of the plant.

Prior to the money being approved Thursday, the grant program had a budget of \$650,000, with \$262,000 already committed for 2016.

The staff report recommended the taxpayer relief

reserve, used to help fund one-time, unanticipated expenditures was the appropriate place for the money

to be drawn from.

The projected year-end balance of the reserve following the approvals

granted Thursday is \$25.7 million, well below the target range of \$43.8 million to \$65.7 million set by the

Region.

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BOB THOMAS/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

The Thorold Reed Concert Band performs the first of its Wednesday night free concerts that run throughout summer in Beaverdams Park in Thorold.

Hey, these activities are free and in Niagara. Really.

From Page 6

Live bands make music real, especially to kids, says Rhonda Gletherow, president of the Thorold Reed Concert Band and bass clarinetist.

"It shows them that there's actually people behind the music," she says.

Picnic blankets and children dancing to big band tunes cultivates an unplugged and uncomplicated atmosphere that

many families need to balance the busyness of life.

It's about community. And giving back, says David Fleming, president of the Lincoln Concert Band, and baritone player. Like other bands, they also visit long-term care facilities and perform for residents.

"We love seeing people smile," he says.

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Man gets two years for role in Sawa jail death

From Page 9

Court was told Hall gave fellow inmate Cale Rose a five-foot-long braided rope made from bed sheets.

Hall fashioned the rope into a noose before handing it to Rose. Rose threw the rope into the cell through the metal hatch and told Sawa to "do himself a favour."

Sawa, described as a "beaten dog," told his cellmate "I'd rather hang myself than get beat every day."

He tied the noose to the bed frame and hanged himself by slumping forward. Sawa was taken to Greater Niagara General Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries Aug. 18. He never regained consciousness.

While Sawa put the rope around his own neck, Brown said Hall's actions were a significant contributing cause of the man's death.

His sister said she continues to be haunted by what happened.

"This trial did not reflect Kelvin as the person he was. It was what strangers thought of him as an accused person."

"Those men were wrong. The world is not a better place without Kelvin Sawa in it."

Rose, who gave Sawa the rope, pleaded guilty in March 2015 to a charge of manslaughter in connection with the case. The 33-year-old was sentenced to the equivalent of 27 months in jail.

Defence lawyer Dirk Destine told Judge Joseph Henderson that his client's guilty plea indicates he is remorseful for his actions and added that several inmates also bear some responsibility for what happened that day.

The judge described the case as a tragedy.

"The family has suffered through an emotional and stressful time," Henderson said. "I have the utmost sympathy for Mr. Sawa's family."

Henderson declared a mistrial in June 2015 after a six-man, six-woman jury failed to reach a unanimous decision after six days of deliberations.

Despite the mistrial, Hall remained behind bars at the conclusion of the trial.

He is currently serving a life sentence for the February 2006 shooting death of a Hamilton man. He has appealed the conviction for that murder and the matter is now before the Ontario Court of Appeal.

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LOCAL NEWS

Province announces rail service expansion into region by 2021

From Page 3

He outlined the hard work taken on by local, provincial and federal leaders, as well as staff, to make the GO dream a reality and credited all involved for their efforts.

"Regional council has been behind this project for years and made sound decisions to invest the resources needed to develop a strong business case," Caslin said.

Niagara presented the province with a business plan for the expansion in April 2015.

That plan recommended area trains connect to the James Street North GO station in Hamilton for transfer to the Lakeshore West line. That will instead take place through the Confederation station in Hamilton.

"Strengthening our connection to and from the GTHA (Greater Toronto Hamilton Area) enhances our ability to attract new people to Niagara, create new opportunities for job creation and business expansion," Caslin said. He estimated GO will provide an annual economic impact of about \$195 million to the region.

When you think about students, when you think about commuters going back and forth to work, when you think about tourists coming down to Niagara, all of this is now possible with the service that's going to be available to them on a daily basis," he said. "The impact to Niagara is going to be huge."

Tuesday's announcement emphasizes "the power of speaking with one voice," he said, adding it shows what a united Niagara can accomplish.

"Two years ago we weren't even on the radar of Metrolinx and GO."

Caslin felt the timeline provided by the province follows logical steps given the work taking place in Hamilton.

He was satisfied with a commitment from Del Duca that the process will be expedited if possible and pleased that upgrades to existing stations will begin next year.

Niagara has been preparing for the arrival of GO and working to ensure inter-municipal transit is available prior to the service's arrival.

"We will be ready," he said, adding transit will be up and running not only in the region's three largest cities, but also in its "extended communities."

Caslin said the local GO working group will continue to maintain momentum on the file "until the first train rolls down the tracks" to ensure the region is on the same page as Metrolinx and the province throughout implementation of the service.

St. Catharines Mayor Walter Sendzik said the GO commitment, regardless of

the timeline, is one that was not in place 24 hours ago.

"The province has set aside full funding to get it from Grimsby to Niagara Falls, so it can't disappear," he said. "We now know that we have the certainty in funding, the certainty in the timeline they've provided, but we also have a better understanding now of what the construction schedule looks like."

Sendzik suspects the timeline will prompt Niagara's municipalities to ensure that if the dates can be accelerated, local infrastructure is in place to immediately support the service.

That includes having an inter-municipal transit system up and running, Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati said, and that achievement is on the horizon.

"We're going to be ready to go. We're going to be ready really soon," he said of the transit working group with representation from Welland, Niagara Falls and St. Catharines, as well as the Region. "We want to merge this into one seamless regionally-integrated transit system — that's the goal that we're moving toward. We're doing that pretty expeditiously."

Diodati called the GO announcement historic for Niagara.

An approval by the treasury board of provincial dollars is "huge," he said. "That's not just politicking, that's committed dollars."

He felt the province was "playing it safe with their dates" for implementing the service, but is hopeful government will "under promise and over deliver."

"It's my hope and expectation we'll do all we can to move that date forward to have GO service sooner rather than later."

Diodati said the opening of a new high-speed rail station in Niagara Falls, N.Y., in July should create a "heightened sense of interest" to get the expansion completed as soon as possible.

"We're going to have a connection between Toronto and New York City and it just so happens to go through Niagara."

The mayor said he hoped to learn more about why the service was unable to immediately begin despite summer weekend GO service already being offered in Niagara.

Metrolinx chief operating officer Greg Percy said CN provides "operating windows" to allow for that summer service, but continued negotiations are needed in order to get weekday service underway. Those windows ensure no interruption to CN's freight operation schedule.

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LOCAL NEWS

Karate offered for special needs students

BERND FRANKE
Postmedia network

Steffanie Hancharyk doesn't believe a special need should stop someone

from pursuing a passion for martial arts.

Beginning this Saturday the martial arts instructor from St. Catharines will start

sharing her knowledge in order to make that happen. Hancharyk intends to teach four karate sessions - four to six years of age, 11-11:45 a.m.; seven to 11, 11:45-12:30 p.m.; 13 and older, 12:30-1:30 p.m.; wheelchair, 1:30-2:30 p.m. - at Welland Martial Centre on Division Street.

Unlike schools, where many with developmental and physical difficulties are integrated into regular classrooms, her classes won't include regular students.

"That would be a disservice to both classes," said Hancharyk, pointing out the regular students could become impatient with the one-on-one

instruction that will be necessary while the special needs students could feel intimidated by the advanced skills of others.

Goal of a program that features little, if any, contact is to introduce people with special needs to an activity that they can enjoy doing.

"The purpose is not self-defence. It's giving them something to do that can engage them and keeps them excited," she said.

Martial arts is good at building self-esteem as well as promoting fitness. Hancharyk said throughout history, in its various forms in different parts of the

world, martial arts has been regarded as a "secret knowledge that's difficult to learn."

Hancharyk, a black belt since 2003, suggested untapping that knowledge is a big part of the appeal of belonging to a club or studio.

"The secret is in the training."

Another attraction that martial arts has for people is an "element of danger."

"There's a little bit of a risk. That's exciting," she said.

At her Welland classes, Hancharyk, who has taught special needs for the past two years, expects to be assisted by Brock recreation and leisure students. She said one-

on-one instruction is going to be necessary in some cases.

"It's very individual but you're with a group doing it," Hancharyk said. "Everything is adaptable."

Cost for the eight-week program is \$125, but people can check it out before making a commitment.

"First, I want to engage them, then I can teach them," she said. "You have to get people to trust."

More information is available by e-mailing Hancharyk at experiencepage@gmail.com. People can also call 905-401-4235 and ask for Karen.

Bfranke@postmedia.com



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Martial arts instructor Steffanie Hancharyk intends to teach karate to people with special needs starting this Saturday in Welland.

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LOCAL NEWS

Healthy Niagara pillar of NHS plan

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

Imagining a healthier Niagara is the theme flowing through a new Niagara Health System 10 year strategic plan.

That vision, and its implementation, was unveiled after an NHS annual general meeting held last Tuesday at St. Catharines hospital.

People attending the gathering were told the effort comes from massive input from staff, physicians, partners and communities.

The vision, as laid out in a publication, "is about partnering to support people to stay healthy, get better, live well with disease and cope with end of life."

It includes community, partner, staff, physician and volunteer engagement.

Areas of focus fold in human, economic and environmental health, and productive partnerships.

"The journey has been a long and extensive one," said new NHS board chair John MacDonald, who spoke at the gathering. "We have had thousands of interactions with people from inside the organization and across the region."

"We listened and learned about what we are doing well, and what we can improve,"



Niagara Health President Dr. Suzanne Johnston outlines the strategic plan for Niagara Health System.

he said. "The process has truly inspired us to imagine a healthier Niagara. We know this is a bold vision, and we are excited about the important role that Niagara Health has in helping to achieve (that)."

NHS president Dr. Suzanne Johnston also spoke at the

post-AGM event.

"I've been bursting with excitement for this day," Johnston said. "This is just a really, really important moment for us."

"And at the same time, it's far more than a moment — it's a celebration of our history in the Niagara Health System, it's

a celebration of the last year of engagement that we've undertaken."

Among the vision outlined is a focus on "extraordinary care" in areas that include promoting safety and preventable harm.

A number of precise ways

highlight this. Among them is ensuring patients have immediate access to critical-care response teams when needed, and preventable harm is to be eliminated from incidents like falls and pressure ulcers.

Patients and families will also be included in the

exchange of information "in care that is respectful and responsive to their individual preferences, needs and values."

Under "extraordinary teams" the plan — as explained in the publication released last Tuesday — speaks to a positive and respectful work environment. Team members are accountable for performance, take action when needed and are engaged at work.

A mandate of "extraordinary future" includes patients receiving standardized approaches to care based on best evidence, and reduced sick and overtime. It also seeks to implement initiatives to keep people "healthy and safe at work."

Under innovation, highlights include boosting partnerships with patients and primary and community care providers and "creating a patients and families as partners strategy."

At the meeting, out-going board chair Barry Wright passed the mantle of chair onto MacDonald. MacDonald is a retired City of Niagara Falls CAO and current national director of the Anglican Network in Canada.

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